



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 73

MAXIMIZING WORKFORCE POTENTIAL THROUGH WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

We all too often view workplace programs, such as compressed work schedules or tele-commuting, as not workable for our office or unit, yet have trouble retaining skilled people. It is our challenge as leaders to critically re-examine workplace flexibility as a key tool in attracting and retaining valued employees and members.

For example, we need not look any farther than the mounting recruitment and retention problems in high-technology positions. Many of these highly skilled workers cite access to workplace flexibility as an important benefit when exploring career options. A Washington Post survey of more than 3,400 technical workers ranked tele-commuting and flextime as one of the top three perks sought more than money, which placed sixth. A recent HR News Online article also cited the importance of workplace flexibility in retaining high-technology employees. According to the article, younger workers are demanding more control over their work environment.

Consider the case favoring flexible work arrangements in other industries:

The Conference Board, comprised of senior industry executives examining business policies and practices, issued the report "Building the Business Case for Workplace Flexibility," in which companies identified these bottom-line results from using flexible work arrangements: productivity gains, improved customer satisfaction, reduced absenteeism and turnover, improved employee morale, pay-back for handling larger work loads due to downsizing, and a recruitment incentive.

Another Conference Board article tracked more than 500 professionals who use flexible work arrangements. Since commencing this tracking, employee turnover has decreased, and the retention of senior female managers has increased by 7 percent. More than a third of these professionals would have left their firm if they had not been offered flexible work options, according to this article. During that same period, revenues went up by 20 percent and the promotion rate for workers using flexible work schedules was the same as for those working traditional hours. The article's point: the kinds and types of workplace options available affect an employee's choice to stay with the organization.

When I met the G-W information technology staff on reporting to this assignment, one employee particularly mentioned she chose working here rather than other places because of our compressed work week policy. The expectation of working long hours is not consistent with many employees' needs and desire to balance their work and private lives. In particular, it can be said Generation "X" works to live, compared to the previous generation, who more often lives to work. This is not to say Generation "X"ers

will not work hard, because they most certainly do, but rather want to be measured by outcomes, not how many hours they put in. In other words, "When the work is finished, it's time to go home." People recognize no control is possible over many aspects of their job. However, in those areas where they can exercise choice and control, people resent not having it. The point might be their perceived need to gain more "control over one's destiny." Providing workplace flexibility wherever and whenever possible can help give employees more individual choice and control.

Translating these workplace needs to our civilian and military workforces, ALCOAST 066/99 reaffirmed ADM Loy's support for flexible workplace programs and encourages local commanders to view these programs as a key factor in recruiting and retaining both military and civilian employees. The ALCOAST lists the workplace options available to both workforces, such as tele-commuting and compressed work schedules, and the leave programs unique to each workforce. Please become familiar with these options.

Given the current tight labor market, the prudent commander or supervisor will explore and weigh how best to incorporate flexible workplace arrangements as a recruitment and retention vehicle for their valued people. I highly encourage you to "think out of the box" in coming up with better ways to accomplish your mission and meet the needs of your people - individually customized to your own local situation. One size does not fit all.

P.S. Corrections:

Flag Voice 71. The web site that was listed is in error. The site in the flag voice is: <http://cgweb.uscg.mil/cgpc.adm/adm1.htm>. The correct site is: <http://cgweb.uscg.mil/cgpc-adm/adm1.htm> (note: cgpc-adm vice cgpc.adm). Additionally, it should be understood that this is a CG intranet site, not an internet site.

Flag Voice 72. In the next to last paragraph, I said "...we must count on [all officers](#) to fulfill their responsibility to accurately, fairly, and objectively evaluate all juniors in their chain of command." Of course, there are [civilian supervisors](#) of junior officers as well, and should rightly have been included.

Regards, FL Ames

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